

WATAC INC REPORT TO ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

JUNE 2013 TO MAY 2014

On Wednesday 26th June, 2013 WATAC held our AGM in the Waratah Room at NSW Parliament House following our 17th Annual Luncheon. The theme of that Luncheon was *"Who Will Speak if We Don't?"* Our two wonderful keynote speakers were Marilyn Hatton and Paul Collins. They also contributed to the AGM. We are very fortunate to have them with us today and they will up-date us regarding the activities of ACCCR, WOW and Catholics for Ministry during 2014. Marilyn Hatton is one of WATAC's representatives on the WOW network, as is also Margaret Day. We are much blessed by these two intelligent and committed women who represent WATAC internationally.

A significant feature of the WATAC annual Luncheon is the presence of some year 10 to 12 school students who, supported by their committed teachers, get very involved in the on-going process of this very special event. Carroll and O'Dea Lawyers have generously contributed financial support over the years to enable the presence of these students and, this year, WN Bull Funeral Services has also contributed financially. WATAC appreciates very much their donations – it makes a significant difference.

In November 2013 WATAC organised another of its Interfaith sessions in the Theatre in Parliament house. The theme is *"Religion and Peace – What are the Challenges and Implications for us all?"* There were 4 speakers, and their focus was the meaning of peace within their religious tradition and in particular the position of women within that tradition. It leads to fascinating discussion, well picked up by the students! In 2013, our speakers were: Rabbi Jacki Ninio, Tamkin Ansari, Elizabeth Carnegie Assistant Principal - Pastoral Care and RE teacher from St Scholastica's College and Graham Toomey, director of the Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative. These wonderful speakers not only informed the students but also challenged them which was obvious in the open forum, question and answer time.

We have been organising these outstandingly successful sessions for many years but in 2013 we changed the process. In the past we started with a light lunch at noon followed by the speakers and 'open forum'. In November, we instead commenced at 11am with speakers, had a break for the light lunch around 12.30pm with the speakers and students mingling and conversing, then returned to the Theatre for the 'open forum'. This open forum is a wonderful session with students vitally involved in discussion and dialogue with the speakers. The event then finished at 2pm, instead of 3pm. This enabled students and teachers to return to their schools at a more suitable time. It was a change well worth the effort and many of the teachers thanked us most enthusiastically. Another Interfaith session is planned for Wednesday 12th November, 2014.

These significant events that WATAC organises in NSW Parliament House would not be possible without the support of our host, Sophie Cotsis MLC; we thank her sincerely, and also her staff for their assistance in organising all the background work required.

On Thursday, 17th October, 2013 the Australian Coalition for Catholic Church Renewal (ACCCR) organised its first formal meeting. It was held at the university House in Canberra. There were six WATAC members there, Maree Kennedy, Barb Minogue, Brian Bright, Carol Feodor, Leonard Blahut (these last 3 from the Leura Group) and Bernice Moore. The focus of the meeting was to explore the "Call to Renewal Statement" central to ACCCR's purpose

for being. There were 45 people present, mainly from four coalition groups who have been networking for some years (Catholics for Ministry, Catholics for Renewal, Inclusive Catholics and WATAC). WATAC is represented on the committee which is doing the on-going work to keep ACCCR a vital, active body, as Marilyn will tell you.

WATAC committed in 2013 to being financially supportive of Rosemary Breen's project in Myanmar (Burma) to help bring clean water to some schools and villages. Rosemary will up-date us on this project today. We are so pleased to be involved with this project.

It is twenty years since WATAC became an incorporated body in November 1993. This was a significant step in the life of WATAC and it was enabled by the voluntary work of Professor Paul Redmond who is a supporter of the vision and objectives of WATAC. We couldn't thank him enough.

The WATAC Newsletter continues to be produced four times a year. Our latest is volume 25, no.2. The Newsletter provides a vital communication with members, for members and between members and groups. Our membership is mainly NSW but also national and we also have a small though significant international mail-out. For many "at a distance WATAC-ers" the Newsletter is their only connection and it sustains their WATAC life.

In October 2013 Pope Francis announced that there would be a Synod on the Family in October 2014 in Rome and he wanted the laity to be consulted. Late in November 2013 a questionnaire was released from Rome and some Bishops published it widely, others ignored it or limited its distribution. WATAC picked it up and sent it out to all our members in early December. Unfortunately, Rome also set a return date of 18th December 2013 for responses. Amazingly 72 WATAC-ers completed the questionnaire and then we collated their responses and with the fantastic help of Paul Collins got them directly to Rome before the closing date so that the authentic WATAC voice will be at the Synod on the Family in Rome in October 2014.

The life-blood of WATAC is the local groups who meet regularly to reflect, discuss, pray, dream and share the vision of a totally Inclusive Catholic Church. Many of these groups organise their own meaningful liturgies as people did in the early Church. "They meet in their homes for the breaking of bread; they shared food gladly and generously." (Acts 2:46)

Helen Coles, our Administration Officer, does an amazing all-inclusive job. Some of her work includes sending the Newsletter to email subscribers, looking after WATAC's presence in Cyberspace liaising with Jason Rhodes in up-dating the WATAC website, plus, plus, plus!!! Her hands-on everyday work keeps WATAC functioning – We couldn't thank her enough!

Finally and most significantly WATAC's activity and achievements are made possible by the hands-on work of the WATAC Inc working Group. Behind every event, celebration and gathering is the work of these people who make them possible. They meet regularly to plan, discuss and imagine future possibilities. This WATAC Inc Working group is presently Jan Barnett, Janet Cain, Margaret Day, Kaye Hodge, Margaret Keyes, Alma Madden and Bernice Moore. Maureen Watterson is our voluntary treasurer, Margaret Knowlden is our voluntary Newsletter typesetter and Helen Coles is our Administration Officer. WATAC could not continue to function without them.